



# Applauding the efforts of others

**MY YEAR** began with a virtual Declaration and then an operation on my knees, neither of which boded well for my plans of being an energetic action-style Sheriff. In the end none of this mattered because it was the people I met who made my year, and most of the time I was simply an onlooker applauding the efforts of others. Indeed, any idea that I might have had about looking the part was soon blown out of the water by a press photographer who asked me, after I had handed out a bag full of certificates to some young people who had completed an excellent Spectra fire brigade course, 'which town crier are you then mate?'

I chose mental health and well-being – focusing on young people – as a broad theme, thinking primarily of those with severe difficulties from birth and others who grew up in homes of alcoholism, drugs and County Lines. This quickly expanded to covering all ages and included military veterans and the homeless to mention but a few.

I did a variety of outings with the police as well as the traditional High Sheriff's visits to the courts of Salisbury and Swindon, the Coroner's Office, the Probation Service and several West Country prisons. Wherever I went there were mental health issues raised and the picture could only be described as bleak. The NHS has neither money nor

staff to really help, the youth clubs have all been closed, and the knowledge and skills to help those with genuine mental health problems are sadly lacking. On top of this a visit to a mental health hospital taught me that the problem is compounded by the fact that young people keep hearing about mental health; on the one hand there are those claiming problems which are exaggerated, while at the same time there are still more people out there with troubles that are seldom recognised. What a disturbing and complicated picture and what a doom and gloom piece I am writing.

But this is where I change tack, because all over Wiltshire and Swindon I have come across local charities providing a lifeline. They are run by a few dedicated individuals and usually backed by handfuls of volunteers who all devote their time to helping others. They don't necessarily have sophisticated qualifications but they bring their experience of life and back it up with action, as I had planned to do as High Sheriff – only I discovered that they were the ones really doing it not me.

As well as patiently working to help other people these small charities have to spend time trying to raise money and awareness of what they do just to keep themselves going. I saw the benefits of using animals to improve well-being, especially horses, but also dogs and farm animals – care farms, forest schools, nature, music and

Sir Charles Hobhouse at (from top): Tedworth Equestrian (armed forces equine charity assisting those with post-traumatic stress disorder), GUL (God Unlimited riding centre, providing an opportunity for equine-assisted therapy to anyone, regardless of age, ability or background) and Greatwood (the first charity to use former racehorses to educate disadvantaged children and young adults with special educational needs)



art are all used to help people break away from their trapped world and find a better, happier way. I have been privileged to see it and, as most High Sheriffs find, I was made to feel very welcome while doing so. I both salute and thank them for all that they do.

One benefit of Covid was to increase communication between High Sheriffs. I thoroughly enjoyed visiting other West Country Legal Services and was delighted to get a good turnout at mine in March.

**Sir Charles Hobhouse Bt**  
*High Sheriff of Wiltshire 2021-22*



Wiltshire Legal Service at Salisbury Cathedral with West Country High Sheriffs L-R: James Attrill (Isle of Wight), Lady Studholme (Devon), His Honour Judge Barnett, Recorder of Salisbury, Hon Mrs Justice Cutts, Christopher Bromfield (Under Sheriff), Sir Charles Hobhouse Bt, Sarah Troughton (Lord-Lieutenant, Wiltshire), Mark Thomas (Cornwall), Jane Tufnell (Gloucestershire), Sue Davies (Bristol), Thomas Sheppard (Somerset) and Michael Dooley (Dorset)